

Umbra et Lumens

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Rating: K

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Author's Note: A birthday ficlet for professorjulia. Thanks to my own personal science geek, van_el, who gave this the go ahead despite arguing some points with me! *lol*

"Can I look now?"

Jason had his hands over his eyes, desperately trying (and failing) to keep from peeking. Clark chuckled. "Not yet. You have to be patient." He fiddled with another adjustment. "I know it's hard, but it'll be worth it, I promise."

If Jason *had* been watching, he would have seen a huge grin on Clark's face. One of the absolute joys of fatherhood had been to do all the things with his son that he'd never been able to do with his own father. He would never trade growing up on the farm in Smallville with Jonathan Kent, not for all the corn ever harvested in all the years he'd lived there... but there was also nothing like this either. His son, due to his hybrid Kryptonian/human heritage, could experience both sides of Clark's life.

At the age of eight, Jason was at that magical age -- he was deeply curious about the way the world worked, and bright enough to understand some of the more advanced concepts. But he had not started to develop the ennui that made working with adolescents so frustrating sometimes. And so when Jason started showing an interest in astronomy... Well, what father would deny his son this experience, especially if he had the ability?

Clark slid out one crystal from the panel before him and replaced it with another data crystal. Jason twitched -- he wanted to look so badly, but he had just enough of Clark's personality that he kept his hands over his eyes. When Lois had been in here, she hadn't been able to resist touching everything and asking a million questions. And he hadn't even been able to take her up in it -- there were too many variables about a full human traveling with him that he couldn't risk it yet.

Jason was a different story. And he was sure that the million questions would also come from Jason, all right, but only after he was allowed to look.

Clark twisted the crystal and gave a command in Kryptonian:  He turned to let Jason know that he could open his eyes, as the shielding before them slowly drew back to give a perfect visual.

However, Jason had already dropped his hands from his eyes -- he had probably understood "*Open Screen*" and could not wait any longer. He stared in open-mouthed fascination at the scene before him.

Earth glowed a vibrant blue and green through the viewscreen of the crystal spaceship,

white clouds swirling across its surface. The planet loomed so large and full, breathtaking in its beauty. It was a shame that only a mere handful of people had ever experienced this sight in person. Just a few astronauts, researchers in the International Space Station, the superheroes in the Watchtower... and now Jason White. Everyone else would have to make do with photographs, at least for the near future.

Which reminded him -- placed a recording crystal in another slot. If Lois could not come up here herself, yet, she should at least be able to experience it in holographic form in the Fortress.

Breaking from his stillness, Jason asked in an excited voice, "Has it started yet?"

"In another minute or so. Do you see the ocean above Russia, near the Arctic Circle?"

Jason focused his sight on the northern part of Europe. "Yes, I think so."

"All right, in about..." He looked down at the readout. "23 seconds, you should be able to see a dark shadow beginning in the ocean and then traveling southward toward Siberia. That's the umbra."

Jason frowned, and tried to focus in closer. His foot and knee began to tap up and down as he waited with barely-controlled patience. And then the umbra appeared, the shadow of the moon as it eclipsed the sun. They watched the dark path travel slowly farther and farther inland, blotting out all color as it made its way across the land.

When Jason had heard there would be a total solar eclipse this summer, he had wanted to see it so badly. They had begun to make plans to travel to Siberia, but this idea had suddenly come to Clark... when Clark had suggested seeing it from space, Jason had practically leapt ten feet in the air, shouting with happiness.

As impatient as Jason had been while waiting, he sat entranced for the entire two-hour show, only taking a breath to ask a question here or there. Finally the shadow turned east and faded from sight, and he sighed with satisfaction. "Wait until I tell Mom! What an awesome field trip!"

Clark reached for Jason's hand, and held it tightly. "It certainly was," he murmured, and then he turned the ship back toward Earth.